Shortage of Wheat and its Export and Import

938. SHRI K.R. MALKANI: Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) the reasons for sudden shortage of wheat in the country;

(b) the reasons why Government are exporting wheat;

(c) whether it is a fact that the sudden Indian order for import of wheat has pushed up world wheat prices; and

(d) if so, what is our wheat export price and wheat import price?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV): (a) The production of wheat in the country during 1996-97 fell by 3.15 million tonnes as compared to the previous year.

(b) In view of the domestic wheat situation, Government has banned all exports of wheat and wheat products.

(c) The international wheat market is quite volatile and prices depend on variable factors like overall world demand and supply, origin classes and grading of wheat presence of major buying interests, etc. Indian purchases being a small fraction of the total world wheat trade of about 111 million metric tonnes in 1995-96, it may not be correct to say that Indian demand has pushed up world wheat prices.

(d) The average price realization per metric tonne of our wheat exports works out to US$182.35 (FOB) approximately. The rates at which wheat has been contracted for import so far are as under:—

Source	Quantity (lakh metric tonnes)	Average Price (permetric tonne in US$)
Australia	13.25	150.00 (FOB)
Canada	2.50	152.50 (FOB)
Argentina	1.00	173.00 (C&F)

Foodgrains stock Position and Artificial Scarcity

939. SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR: Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) the foodgrains stock position in the national stock as on July 1, 1996;

(b) the amount of wheat and rice exported since then, indicating details of exports;

(c) whether these exports gave rise to an artificial scarcity of foodgrains in the country, necessitating imports of wheat and rice; and

(d) the amount of wheat and rice imported during the period, indicating details of imports and how much of it is proposed to be kept as buffer stock?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV): (a) The stock of foodgrains in the Central Pool as on 1st July, 1996 was estimated at 26.83 million tonnes consisting of 12.88 million tonnes of rice and 13.95 million tonnes of wheat.

(b) The details of wheat and rice exported during the period from July, 1996 to December 1996 are as under:

(Provisional)

Foodgrains	Quantity in lakh tonnes	Value in Rs. Crores
Wheat	3.44	217.64
Basmati Rice	2.18	525.35
Non-Basmati Rice	9.09	877.20

(c) and (d) No, Sir. There was no import of rice during 1996-97. Import of wheat was necessitated by a fall in procurement of wheat caused by a decline in production of foodgrains during 1996-97. Government have authorised the State Trading Corporation of India to import upto 2 million tonnes of wheat during 1996-97. As on 14.2.1997, STC has finalised contracts for import of 16.75 lakh tonnes of wheat from Australia, Canada and Argentina. The entire imported wheat consignment will be added to the Central Pool stocks.